



COUNTY OF SONOMA

HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

READ AND CONSIDERED

DATE 8/21/24 BY [Signature]

Janell Crane, Director

Employment • Classification • Employee Relations • EEO • Training • Risk Management

August 14, 2024

The Honorable Shelly J. Averill
Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California
County of Sonoma
Hall of Justice
600 Administration Drive, Courtroom 15
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Re: Required Responses to the 2023-2024 Grand Jury Final Report

Dear Judge Averill:

Pursuant to California Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, the County of Sonoma Human Resources Department respectfully submits the attached response to the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Grand Jury Final Report on "Often Reported, Never Repaired."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Janell Crane".

Janell Crane
Director

cc: The Board of Supervisors
Christina Rivera, County Executive
Deva Proto, County Clerk-Recorder-Assessor-Registrar of Voters

Attachment: Response

DEPARTMENT GRAND JURY REPORT RESPONSES

Report Title: Often Reported, Never Repaired
Report Date: June 17, 2024
Response by: Janell Crane Title: Director
Agency/Department Name: Sonoma County Department of Human Resources

FINDINGS ASSOCIATED WITH REQUIRED RESPONSE:

- F3. Chronic short staffing and employee turnover have led to a significant loss of institutional knowledge.
- F4. Inadequate delegation of authority and a toxic work culture inhibits individual decision-making and contributes to DHS's failure to perform effectively.

I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: F3 and F4.
(See attached.)

RECOMMENDATIONS REQUIRED RESPONSES:

- R2. By November 1st, 2024, DHS and County Human Resources departments shall submit a recruitment and retention plan to the County Executive to reduce DHS vacancies to no more than 10% of authorized non-field positions. (F3, F4)

Recommendation numbered: R2 require(s) further analysis.
(See attached.)

Date: 8/14/24 Signed: Janell Crane
Number of pages attached: 2

Response to 2023-24 Grand Jury Report: Often Reports, Never Repaired

Following are the Sonoma County Department of Human Resources' (HR) required responses to the 2024 Grand Jury Report investigation titled "Often Reported, Never Repaired."

Findings

F3. Chronic short staffing and employee turnover have led to a significant loss of institutional knowledge.

We disagree wholly or partially with this finding.

Currently, it is difficult for the Human Resources Department to substantiate this claim. While short staffing and employee turnover historically lead to a loss of institutional knowledge, Human Resources does not have sufficient information to validate this finding.

F4. Inadequate delegation of authority and a toxic work culture inhibits individual decision making and contributes to DHS's failure to perform effectively.

We disagree wholly or partially with this finding.

Currently, it is difficult for the Human Resources Department to substantiate this claim. However, during FY 2024/25 Human Resources will be launching a county-wide employee engagement survey which will provide us with the data needed to develop and implement strategies to incorporate survey outcomes into future operational planning.

HR will work with a consultant to analyze the responses to gain insights into employee satisfaction, engagement levels, and specific areas needing attention. These strategies will aim to improve work culture and foster a positive and productive work environment, with the goal of improving employee retention and sense of belonging.

Recommendations

R2. By November 1st, 2024, DHS and County Human Resources departments shall submit a recruitment and retention plan to the County Executive to reduce DHS vacancies to no more than 10% of authorized non-field positions. (F3, F4)

This recommendation requires further analysis.

We are unclear of the definition of what "non-field" positions is referring to. DHS does not track vacancy rates by whether the position serves in a "field" setting or not. Nonetheless, we offer the following information.

The challenges the Department of Health Services has faced the last several years to fill healthcare related positions are not unique to Sonoma County. There is a shortage of individuals entering the industry and an insufficient number of qualified individuals interested in changing employers right now to fill vacancies at both private and public employers. This shortage has greatly contributed to the department's inability to quickly fill positions in some

job classifications as well as an increased vacancy rate, when coupled with the significant growth the department has experienced in recent years (the number of allocated positions has increased 37% between the start of Fiscal Years 19/20 and 24/25).

The job classifications with the highest number of vacant allocations in the Department of Health Services include Behavioral Health Clinician Intern/Clinician, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Counselor I/II, Senior Client Support Specialist, and Environmental Health Specialist Trainee/I/II. Positions in these job classifications require either specific education, work experience, and/or professional licensure, which significantly limits the number of qualified applicants the County receives and subsequently progress through examination and selection processes.

As of June 28, 2024, the overall vacancy rate for the Department of Health Services was 14.50%. When excluding positions in the aforementioned four job classifications with the department's highest numbers of vacancies, which are also amongst the County's most difficult to fill, the vacancy rate drops to 10.79%. This rate includes positions that work in administration, clinical, and field settings. Human Resources and the Department of Health Services need further clarification to identify what specific positions are being referred to as "authorized non-field positions" in order for Human Resources to determine what the adjusted vacancy rate with that parameter applied.

Central Human Resources and the Health Services Department are and will continue meeting regularly to discuss recruitment needs and remain expeditious in developing and continuing efforts to reduce the department's vacancy rate. The two departments have recently collaborated on a tracking mechanism which allows staff to identify the length of time various recruitment, examination, and selection process steps take to complete, determine if there are any "pain points" or delays at any steps in the process, and implement solutions with the intent to reduce delays for future recruitments. Staff are also currently looking at ways to be more strategic in recruiting, examining, and selecting individuals for hard-to-fill job classifications. Current strategies include evaluating the efficacy of recruitment advertising, examination, department selection, and pre-employment processes to maximize visibility, remove hurdles and/or barriers that may cause qualified individuals from either not applying or opting out of the process, and reduce lengthy/protracted timelines which make the County less competitive compared to private sector employers for similar types of positions. As efforts in these areas progress, both departments anticipate Health Services' vacancy rate will continue to decline. Should that not occur, or should additional attention be warranted, the departments will engage with the County Executive if determined necessary at the time.